



Poor People's United Fund

645 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 262-5922 • (617) 262-1831 fax
e-mail: kip@ppuf.org

Boston's Spare Change Community

Spring 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

What a harsh winter it has been --- near 70 degrees in January and below zero since then. Hard to dismiss the notion of global warming, even though Bush still thinks it's a hoax. Tell that to the folks that are freezing in their apartments in Boston!

The response to our book *Urban Meditations* has been pleasing to us. We have sold- believe it or not- close to a thousand copies! We have received touching letters - some we hadn't heard from in years. One of them

from Tony Mullaney, a former Benedictine priest I had worked with thirty years ago. Tony says, "I am grateful to you for many things but perhaps for none more than the simple path- some might say purity of heart- that has largely defined your life for as long as I have known you ... it's a path of ministry 'with' rather than 'to' ... a big reason I think why you have never succumbed to cynicism or despair which is often the lot of those who go after the institutions and systems- especially as fiercely as you do.

The faces of the victims have been God's gift to you. No wonder you don't give in or give up- nor apparently give out." Tony and Fran and I have known each other for over 30 years now and we are all still going strong!

Georgia, Kip & Fran

And, another letter from someone we also met 30 years ago, Barbara Zanotti (now Barbara Hope). She writes, "Thank you so much for writing the book - I loved it and couldn't put it down ... I felt your deep passion for justice for the poor and it brought back so many memories. I live in Maine now for the past 24 years. I have found that the people living in poverty (isolation, poor housing, lack of adequate heat, a series of broken down vehicles, unemployment ...the needs are so great. I have found that the people in these small communities care for each other. People pride themselves in being survivors, just like their ancestors. They are brave in "making do" even in harsh circumstances. I have come to love them ... thank you again for writing, for reminding me once again that we must do both: alleviate the suffering of the poor and eliminate the causes of oppression." Fran and I are so grateful we were able to do this book and reconnect with old friends ...

A few of our old friends and warriors died recently- Myra Mc Adoo of the South End, a valiant worker for poor people and in an area that has been gentrified, beginning in the late 70s. And our dear friend and PPUF board member, Eric Weinberger, of Bread Not Bombs, who for years, fed the hungry on Boston Common. (See his obit in this issue...)

After the flush of winning the House and the Senate, Congress must settle down to “get it back on the right track.” - a tougher job than anyone might have thought what with the entrenchment of Republican members and their friends ... a similar thing is happening at the State House here with Duval Patrick our new governor beginning to take heat for what he hasn't accomplished yet. (Being on the job for a couple of months, of course miracles are expected.) Hopefully, he is his own man and will not be stymied by the detractors. We must admit we are a bit put off by his notion that giving volunteerism \$3 million, may not be the answer to all our problems. Apparently, he is going to try to set up a volunteer army to work with non-profits. Oh Duval, we tried that in the 70s and 80s and 90s and discovered that while volunteers are essential to non-profits .It does not change anything. Better the 3 million went to housing, or medical access or books for kids in under funded schools.

One of the big pluses, though in academia, is the appointment of the first female to run Harvard -Drew Faust Gilpin who ran the Program at Radcliff, who attended the party the Schlesinger Library gave us a few months ago. WOW! Talk about touching history. When Fran and I were fellows at the Bunting Institute years ago, Harvard began asking me for my “papers”. Little did they know how many of them I had! So, this year I wrapped them all up- all thirty cartons of ‘em!! The reception was kind of a two fold affair. One, to celebrate my papers being at the Schlesinger, and two, an opportunity for Community Works, which Fran and I helped found in the early 80s, to make a pitch about Community Works to librarians. It was well attended.

Thanks to you Poor People's United Fund is still alive and dancing in the streets. We have been doing this economic ministry out of Old South Church for 25 years now. When you realize that over a six year period 600 non-profits went down the tubes, and we are happy to report we are still holding our own!!

We are even thinking about bringing on a new group on soon -a group of young teens women who give support to other teenagers through their group called Reflect and Strengthen. (More about them on another page) So life somehow goes on and we Spring Eternal!, Waiting for Spring

In the meantime, remember we love you and are deeply appreciative of you support.

Hopefully, life will be better for all of us when Spring finally does arrive.

In Solidarity and Hope,

Kip, Fran and Georgia.

Poor People's United Fund Board Member Memorial

Eric Weinberger, 1932-2006

By Aaron St. Jean

Eric Weinberger, a lifelong activist and organizer in the civil rights, anti-nuclear, and anti-war movements, died on December 15, 2006 at the Goddard House Nursing Home in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. Eric was best known in Boston for his work with Food Not Bombs, an organization which provides free food to the hungry year-round in public parks.

Weinberger was born February 19, 1932 in New York City. As a teenager he performed as a magician at birthday parties, sometimes assisted by his younger brother. He began studying at the University of Chicago at the age of 15. He found the academic world suffocating, and after a year and a half, he dropped out. He traveled the country, hitchhiking and riding trains, and worked in a carnival for the next few years, until he began studying at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In this progressive scholarly environment, he finally felt at home and concentrated on poetry, theater, and writing.

Eric became involved with the civil rights movement after his introduction to the New England Committee for Nonviolent Action, in Connecticut, where he first began his lifelong commitment to nonviolent action as a means to achieve social change. In 1962 Weinberger was instrumental in founding the Haywood Handicrafters' League, an economic empowerment project for displaced African American women in Brownsville, Tennessee. Eric's presence was not welcomed by law enforcement and he suffered several brutal beatings in the local jail. In 1963 Eric and nine other activists from the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) set out to complete the route of postal worker Bill Moore, who was murdered while walking from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi to deliver a letter to the governor pleading for an end to segregation. Eric and the other Freedom Walkers were arrested after crossing the Alabama border for "conduct likely to provoke a riot." Eric refused to eat during the entire duration of his time in prison. Only 12 days after being released, Eric was arrested again at a sit-in at an Atlanta restaurant. He was asked to give trainings in nonviolent civil disobedience to people there and became the target of increasing police repression, culminating in an arrest in which he was beaten and burned with chemicals. Weinberger was the victim of at least one bombing attempt during his time in the south. After the 1965 march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Weinberger returned north.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Eric worked as an accountant to support his family, becoming a self-taught expert in tax law. He remained active in both anti-war and anti-nuclear activism during this period, including resistance to the construction of a reactor at Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire. In the late 1980s, feeling burned out from his professional work, he retired to return to full-time activism.

In Boston Weinberger became involved with the Free Theater Collective, which collaborated with the founding chapter of Food Not Bombs, which began as a group to feed protesters at Seabrook and elsewhere. Food Not Bombs became a major part of Eric's life for the next 18 years.

In the 1990s he participated in ACT UP and Housing Now demonstrations and every autumn he attended the National Day of Mourning, in Plymouth, Massachusetts organized by the United American Indians of New England. In 2000 Eric took part in protests against the economic colonialism of the IMF/ World Bank. The same year he was involved with Biodevastation, the first ever mobilization to counter the proponents of genetic engineering.

Eric will be remembered by many people for many things, but throughout it all he carried himself with dignity and an extreme humbleness. He devoted his entire life to working for justice, easing the hardships of others, and serving as a mentor and inspiration to many younger activists.

In the last few years of his life, Eric experienced the gradual degenerative effects of Alzheimer's disease and was cared for by friends. He ...held on to his sense of humor for as long as he could, sometimes laughing at the absurd statements that would come out unexpectedly. He passed away in his sleep at the age of 74.



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Non-Profit Organization

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Community Works (CW), a network of 30 social justice organizations
As a CW member, PPUF receives a generous share
of funds raised from employees all over Massachusetts!*

*CW wants to add more payroll deduction campaigns to its roster of businesses
that currently offer a choice to their employees.*

*If you would like a **charitable choice at your workplace**, PLEASE call Pam
Rogers at 617-423-9555. To see a list of current workplaces offering
Community Works go to www.communityworks.com.*



Tiernan papers come to Schlesinger Library

Reprinted from a Harvard Gazette article 11-16-2006

Boston legend Kip Tiernan, founder of Rosie's Place and the Boston Food Bank and co-founder of the Poor People's United Fund, the Boston Women's Fund, Health Care for the Homeless, and Community Works, has given the first installment of her papers to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute.

"Kip Tiernan has lived a life of courage and creativity, not only inventing new ways to organize and assist the homeless and the urban poor but selflessly dedicating her own life to achieving social justice. The Schlesinger Library is honored to have her papers and to celebrate her wisdom and accomplishments," said Nancy F. Cott, director of the Schlesinger Library and Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. (For more information about the Tiernan Papers or to schedule an appointment to see the papers, please contact the Schlesinger Library at (617) 495-8647.)

Including television interviews, news clippings, personal appointment books, and other documentation of Tiernan's tireless efforts on behalf of the poor and homeless, her papers complement the distinguished collections already housed at the Schlesinger Library that document women's work in promoting social welfare and services to the poor. Among those collections are the records of Rutland Corner House, North Bennett Street School, and Denison House. Similarly, Tiernan's work for peace in Vietnam will add to the documentation of women activists such as Barbara Deming and Holly Near.

***For more about Kip's
papers call Schlesinger
Library
617-495-8647.***

Tiernan was born in West Haven, Conn., where she was raised by her grandmother. After moving to Boston, she worked in public relations and advertising before devoting herself to the anti-war, civil rights, and anti-poverty work that centered at St. Philip's and Warwick House in Boston's South End. In response to the growing number of homeless and poor women, Tiernan founded Rosie's Place in 1974, the first drop-in and emergency shelter for women in the United States. In subsequent years, its focus shifted from overnight sheltering and feeding to providing the services needed to help women "dig themselves out of untenable situations."

In 1979, Tiernan and Fran Froehlich created the Boston Food Pantry, which was later incorporated as the Boston Food Bank. The following year, they founded the Poor People's United Fund (PPUF), which sought to provide financial and advocacy support to grassroots organizations in the Greater Boston area. The Ethical Policy Project, an outgrowth of Tiernan's and Froehlich's work as fellows at the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College in 1988-89, was recast as the PPUF in 2002, with a mission to change the public policies that deny access to basic human services to all Massachusetts residents. The recipient of numerous honorary degrees and awards, Tiernan is an adjunct professor at the University of Massachusetts.

"How fortunate for me that I was able to select 'the edge' as my personal geography so many years ago," says Tiernan. "For poor people, 'the edge' is selected for them by those in power. Having selected my political/theological geography, I was able to help choreograph several life-giving organizations in Boston. Sheltering the homeless and feeding the hungry has remained my *raison d'être* ... trying to help set at liberty those who are oppressed is what I'm still working at!"

Reflect and Strengthen continued ...

their boyfriend's drugs, or are getting locked up for fighting, are dealing with bigger issues. "A lot of it comes down to poverty, lack of resources and health care as well as quality education ."

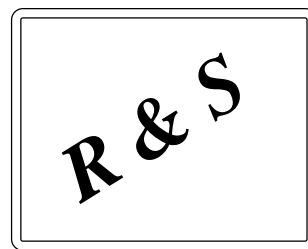
Said Berry, "We just want to let young women know that they are not alone, and that they have a space where they can build relationships with each other in a society that teaches women that they can't get along with each other."

-NEWSWORTHY-

STRENGTH IN THEIR NUMBERS

Gathering of girls grows into network

By Lauren Johnson Globe Correspondent August 27, 2006



Their girl talk wasn't just catching up on gossip or dishing about the latest music and movies.

For eight young women living in some of Boston's toughest neighborhoods a half-dozen years ago, get-togethers at each other's homes after school meant time to lean on each other through experiences with some of life's harder knocks. Personal journals were carried along, and the friends often read their entries aloud, asking each other for advice.

It didn't take long for them to realize they were on to something. Hanging out was more than a way to pass time: The sisterly support helped them through their problems.

They decided to create a network for other young women like themselves. In 2001, a grant from the Chahara Foundation enabled them to create and perform "Tabula Rasa and All That Ying Yang," a play written by, and based on, the experiences of the eight friends.

And the group gave itself a name: **Reflect and Strengthen**. Now a registered nonprofit organization with 32 members, 13 to 30 years old, the group receives funding from 15 local organizations and charities, including Boston Women's Fund, Haymarket People's Fund, and the Freedom House, where the organization holds meetings.

The group also pays three coordinators to help manage its three primary support programs, as well as bring workshops modeled on the group's dynamic into the Boston public schools.

In "Girl's Rap," members break into groups according to age and work through personal problems with a licensed counselor. "What's the 411" brings members together to discuss current events and politics. "Street Theater" turns the group's discussions into performances, using members' original prose and poetry.

This fall, Reflect and Strengthen plans to reach a hand through the bars of Department of Youth Services facilities in Boston by setting up support groups for girls held there.

"You'll find that girls in detention centers ... and repeat offenders, are not spoken with to figure out the root causes of why they're there," said Shana Turner, official founder of Reflect and Strengthen. "We know it's more than just 'You're in jail because you sold your body to get money.' It's also 'But why did you need the money to begin with?' "Roselyn Berry, a Dorchester resident and co-coordinator of Reflect and Strengthen, said she believes more resources are given to boys in detention centers because their struggles are sometimes more visible, involving violence. Girls' problems often are more internalized, she said, related to self-esteem.

"Girls see images of women being exploited in the media, in magazines, in movies, and even in books," she said. She believes this adds up and contributes to negative body image, which can play a role in prostitution.

"These women don't see their bodies as their temples," said Tayla Mayo, a 21-year-old Reflect and Strengthen member from Dorchester. "They see them as their paycheck."

Eli Pabon, from Jamaica Plain, another group co-coordinator, emphasized that the key objective of the effort will be to examine the causes of the problems that lead to incarcerations. "These girls don't just wake up and say, 'Hey, I want to be a prostitute today,'" Pabon said. "A lot of girls who are in prostitution, or who holding